

SMALL TOWN, BIG BEACH

# VISION<sup>2025</sup>

for Sustainability





SMALL TOWN, BIG BEACH™

To Our Community,

The members of the Gulf Shores City Council and I recognize the significant opportunity that we have as a community to define the future for Gulf Shores and our obligation to put plans in place to make that future a reality for us all.

Our community relies greatly on our beachfront and thriving tourism industry. This industry allows us to welcome millions of visitors each year and generates 62% of the city's annual revenue base. In recent years, we have experienced how delicate this balance between nature and economy can be and how our dependence on this segment of the economy leaves our community vulnerable to storms, oil spills and other disasters.

For nearly two years, our administration has worked with local stakeholder groups to develop a strategic plan to focus the growth and design the future of Gulf Shores. This plan is about shifting the mindset of our community from "let it happen" to "make it happen" by identifying strategies that help our community become more sustainable. These strategies will allow us to address challenges related to transportation, will create opportunities to diversify our tourism-dependent economy and will help us protect our natural environment and enhance the quality of life we all enjoy.

We feel it is important to note that the plans you are about to review are only in a preliminary stage. We welcome your valuable dialogue and insight as we finalize the *Small Town, Big Beach Vision 2025 for Sustainability*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Craft".

Robert Craft, Mayor

## **Mission Statement**

The City of Gulf Shores is committed to meeting and exceeding the needs and expectations of our residents, visitors and businesses in preserving our city's family-friendly, small-town atmosphere and beautiful natural surroundings, while providing the infrastructure and amenities necessary to support a sustaining, vibrant economy.

## **Introduction**

The Small Town, Big Beach Vision 2025 for Sustainability was created to focus the future of Gulf Shores, addressing growing concerns about how to sustain our quality of life and natural ecology and providing a set of recommended strategies based on the community's core values.

The City intends to prioritize allocation of its resources based on these core values:

- We protect and enhance the quality of life for our residents and visitors
- We protect and preserve our unique natural resources
- We honor the family-centric and safety-oriented tradition
- We maintain a relaxed, no-hassle environment
- We support a clear culture of Southern hospitality
- We enhance the sense of place
- We embed sustainability into the fabric of the community
- We promote economic prosperity in a business-friendly atmosphere
- We boost competition in the marketplace, unaccepting of the status quo
- We commit to excellence and the highest quality standards

## **Vision 2025**

In the year 2025, the City of Gulf Shores will be the most desirable small-town destination community in the South to live, visit, retire and invest due to its enduring, wholesome, low-key and pleasurable lifestyle amidst its restorative and vibrant natural surroundings and thriving economy.





## Action 1: Medical

We have a responsibility to provide direct access to quality wellness services and emergency care to our citizens and visitors. Encouraging quality public health serves the needs of our citizens and helps to foster retiree and visitor recruitment and retention.

Proposal: The city supports the development of a prestigious medical facility invested in people, patient and family-centered care, medical discovery and education. The complex, located within the coastal Alabama region, will be impressive in scope, innovation and medical specialties.

### Key Benefits:

- Promote geographic diversification by redistributing traffic away from Highway 59
- Provide access to innovative treatment specific to needs
- Create partnerships to strengthen our education ecosystem and diversify our economy

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## Action 2: Education

Exposure to advanced levels of education and curriculum supports sustainable economic development by providing our community with a perpetual and attractive workforce.

Proposal: The city and its partners will build a first-rate academic campus incorporating a powerful dual-enrollment model proven to promote access to higher education. The campus will feature a leading-edge design incorporating the latest technology into a new high school and a new additional Faulkner State Community College location complete with on campus housing and student life activities. This innovative campus will encourage affiliations with four-year universities to complete the higher education model by offering bachelor's and master's programs.

### Key Benefits:

- Resolve overcrowding and traffic issues with our current school campus.
- Provide our citizens with a direct and affordable path to a four-year degree or vocational career without ever having to leave our community
- Serve as an attraction for residential retention and relocation
- Attract educational and business conferences to bolster our shoulder season tourism
- Enhance our community pride and perception with nationally-recognized programs in ecology, maritime, culinary, hospitality and college preparatory specialties

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### Action 3: Gulf State Park

Enhancement of Gulf State Park will foster a synergistic and sustainable relationship between the park's habitats, ecology and economy by promoting the equitable sharing and protecting of resources.

#### Proposal:

1. The city will support projects to provide better access from the Baldwin Beach Express to the beach in an effort to help connect visitors to Gulf State Park.
2. Environmental improvements include an environmental research and education facility for Alabama students, trail development and enhancement in the park, dune restoration along the park's beachfront and the establishment of a coastal ecosystems interpretive center.
3. Reconstruction of the lodge and conference center stimulates tourism and strengthens opportunities for a year-round, stable coastal economy by supporting local jobs and introducing a new market of conference-attending visitors to our area.

#### Key Benefits:

- Resolve major traffic obstacles, a primary facilitator in our ability to develop economic diversification
- Attract professionals, educators, students, outdoor enthusiasts, photographers, families and conservationists to appreciate our distinct bionetwork
- Enhance the city's ecological and educational reputation in the market
- Inspire the conservation and preservation of our environment and invite locals and visitors to become ambassadors for the Alabama Gulf Coast

#### Notes:

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## Action 4: Waterway District

A vibrant waterway district will create a unique sense of community and place that engages citizens and guests in an enriched experience of the local landscape, economy and culture.

Proposal: Waterway Village has already begun to take shape along the Intracoastal Waterway. This walkable waterfront district will connect the north and south sides of the Intracoastal Waterway and the east and west sides of Highway 59. Its pedestrian-friendly design will feature quaint streets with tree-lined sidewalks, inviting seating areas, decorative lamp posts and a waterfront boardwalk offering a year-round destination for dining, shopping, arts and entertainment.

### Key Benefits:

- Connect the north and south sides of The Intracoastal Waterway and east and west sides of Highway 59
- Provide a lively destination and unique “sense of place” where locals and visitors can gather
- Enhance our community’s resiliency and geographic diversification by providing a new economic hub in an area away from the beach
- Promote local businesses and attract private enterprise investment

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## Action 5: Gulf Beach District

The construction of a walkable, energetic beachfront district will attract tourism, stimulate local business, and encourage business and residential relocation.

### Proposal:

1. Revitalize our beachfront with the development of a quaint, landscaped boulevard that will reroute tourism traffic further from the coastline.
2. Design and construct a contemporary beachfront that is pedestrian- and bike-friendly with access to beachfront dining, shopping and entertainment.
3. Connect the Gulf Beach District to Waterway Village with a pedestrian and bike-friendly route.

### Key Benefits:

- Rejuvenate the face of our community and instill pride with residents that love to live here and visitors that love to visit here.
- Elevate reputation of the community
- Provide a walkable community that is welcoming, safe and accessible
- Lessen storm damage recovery by rerouting major roadways farther north from the coastline
- Increase property value and contribute to the local economy.

### Notes:

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## **We Want to Hear from You**

The Small Town, Big Beach Vision 2025 for Sustainability is being developed to shift our focus from a “let it happen” mindset to a “make it happen” mindset. These strategies will help our community become more sustainable by addressing challenges related to transportation, by creating opportunities to diversify our economy and by protecting our natural environment and enhancing the quality of life we all enjoy.

We invite you to actively participate in the development of these plans and we welcome your ideas, comments and questions as we move forward.

### **Review Plans**

**Visit [www.gulfshoresal.gov/Vision2025](http://www.gulfshoresal.gov/Vision2025)**

Review preliminary plans for the Small Town, Big Beach Vision 2025 for Sustainability.

### **Submit Ideas & Vote for your Favorites**

**Visit [www.gulfshoresal.gov/CommunityVoice](http://www.gulfshoresal.gov/CommunityVoice)**

Submit your ideas for ways our community can achieve Vision 2025. View ideas from others in the community and vote for your favorites.

### **Comments & Questions**

**Visit [www.gulfshoresal.gov/RequestTracker](http://www.gulfshoresal.gov/RequestTracker)**

Submit your questions or comments about Vision 2025 for the Mayor, City Council and staff.